

September, 1979

Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

FAIRMOUNT CENTER/COVENTRY LIBRARY SITUATION

On July 31, 1979 the Fairmount Center For The Performing Arts closed the doors of its Coventry Campus and announced that the building would be sold. Their decision has opened a whole can of worms that becomes more complex each day. I will attempt to sort out the worms for the benefit of those, myself included, who may be confused. If I do not succeed to everyone's satisfaction, I suggest that those not satisfied send their own version to the editor of CVN.

Selling the building is not so simple as it would seem. 1) Light of Yoga Society has first right of refusal, having made an offer to buy last year when FC first talked of selling. Ultimately, FC withdrew the building from sale. In my understanding, first right of refusal means that if the Center wants to sell to any group or person at a given price it must first offer Light of Yoga the chance to buy it or refuse it at that price. 2) Cleveland Foundation, whose \$60,000. grant money enabled FC to buy the building, claims that the money and/or the building reverts back to them if not used by FC for the benefit of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities as intended. 3) Zoning restrictions limit the use of the building. Since the zoning is residential, any buyer must meet approval of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and ultimately City Council regarding any change in the usage.

While planning to sell the building, FC currently leases part of it. The lease for Coventry Library's two rooms has 1½ years to go. Heights Guild of Artists and Artisans has rented the lower floor, including the kiln, on a monthly basis. The Theater for the Deaf is renting for a year. The Dance Center, a newly formed group of dance instructors formerly with FC, is leasing until they decide on a permanent location.

The Library Board has stated lack of interest, and is leaning toward continuing to negotiate with Louis Zipkin for the purchase of 3,000 sq. ft. in the future Coventryard. At a price of about \$64.00 per sq. ft., the space, just the size of Carroll Drug Store, would cost \$193,500. At the same time, the Library Board is looking into estimates on the cost of renovation and further operation of the FC building which contains 11,169 sq. ft. Board members are appealing to the community for "help," for ideas, for information about groups able to meet the market price of \$6-\$7 per sq. ft. for rental. Light of Yoga continues to express interest in buying or sharing ownership.

In a poll of 27 merchants I have found the following: 21 preferred to have the library remain in the FC building; 2 preferred to have it move to Coventryard; 1 was strongly against Coventryard but not preferring any other location; 3 had no opinion. Only 2 felt their business would improve by having the library in Coventryard. The rest felt their business would not be affected either way, and they had many other reasons for preferring the location of FC. Most often mentioned were the character of the building, the space available for expansion, and the need for a community room and a full-service library.

FAIRMOUNT CENTER/LIBRARY SITUATION(continued)

City Council has taken a position of placing one foot on each of two logs floating in a swamp. Council has unanimously rejected (councilmen Connors and Boyle absent) the use of block grant funds for the community meeting room part of the Library Board's projected plan for buying space in Coventryard. First, they don't think the city should provide operating or capital funds to another tax-funded body - however they reserve the right to review and approve proposals if cooperation among public bodies would serve a clear purpose for public good. Secondly, they don't believe council should fund neighborhood community rooms "throughout the city." However, council has instructed city staff to "explore the use of the historically and architecturally significant building and the use of fifth year block grant funds." Perhaps this leaves an option for a new proposal from the Library Board.

The community has seized upon the possible sale of the FC building as a gift from heaven, a chance to restore what was lost five years ago, and has been mourned ever since: Coventry Library. By the community I mean that it is not just the "Coventry Critics" and Coventry PTA. It is many individuals and many Coventry merchants who collected the 2,045 signatures presented to the Library Board August 20. Attendance of 50 spectators at the Library Board meeting was an all-time high. The addresses with the 2,045 signatures indicate that the support for buying back the building is widespread, not limited to the Coventry area. The support of the principals of Coventry Elementary, Roxboro Elementary, a Roxboro Jr. High Schools in their letter to the Sun Press, and letters from the PTA Boards of each of these schools bring additional evidence of support. People are passionate about Coventry Library and the building itself. They want the building to be a cultural center for Coventry, with an expanded, enriched library as part of it.

Coventry Community Library Advisory Committee (CCLAC), an independent citizens group in existence even before the idea of selling the Coventry Library building was a gleam in the Library Board's eye, is having a meeting on Sunday, September 9 at 2:00pm. at Coventry Library. All citizens concerned about the future of the building and of Coventry Library are urged to attend. Rose Perlman, president of CCLAC, sees it as a brain-storming session in an attempt to respond to the Library Board's pleas for ideas and practical suggestions. Membership in CCLAC is free.

The citizens' desire for an expanded Coventry Library in its old building is very strong, and is growing stronger. The obstacles are many: legal, political, financial and emotional. Many organizations have tentacles in this situation. However, I have to be optimistic and believe that the will of the community will prevail; something will be worked out by the brainy people who run these organizations. The goodwill of the Coventry community is not to be taken too lightly by any of them. I have the strong impression that Mayor Wright, Barbara Jenkins, and June Wortman are in basic agreement that the building should be a community cultural center, and that the library should be in it. If these three can agree, then a miracle has already begun to happen, and may continue. The mice are roaring. The worms are turning. The lions are lying down with the lambs. Who knows what may happen next.

June Wortman

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA ROCK COURT

The three houses on Rock Court were destroyed on Thursday, August 16. Owners of the property, A. Siegler and Sons, evicted the residents and razed the houses after a long and well-publicized court battle with the tenants. The surrender of the inhabitants came only when it became clear to them that they no longer had the money needed to file further appeals.

Rock Court residents and friends had appeared at the meeting of City Council just prior to the demolition, in order to request that Council support a more humane approach to development in Coventry, which approach would include preservation of the wooded area to the north and east of the doomed houses. Five members of City Council courteously remained in chambers to hear such statements from the public after Mayor Marjorie B. Wright "adjourned" the meeting, and angrily left the room with senior staff members in tow.

The actual demolition of the houses was a sad process to watch, but it was not without its droll moments. After the northernmost house was bulldozed into history, it became obvious that no one had bothered to shut off its gas supply. The valve for the former house was located quickly, and the gas was turned off. However, work crews could not seem to find the valves for the other two houses. This might have been because the valves had been concealed under heaps of stone by savvy locals who watched with glee as the destruction came to a halt for several exceedingly expensive hours. A crew had to dig up most of Rock Court with a backhoe in order to find the valves.

What happens to the land next? No one seems to be quite sure. The obvious use to which the land could be put is that of additional parking for the present Pick-n-Pay. But even this expansion, being a change of land use (residential to parking) within a "S-2" special development zoning district, would require months of Planning Commission hearings and municipal red tape. Community pressure for conservation of the wooded ecology which adjoins the parcel is mounting, but has so far found few sympathetic ears at City Hall.

Meanwhile, development plans for the massive new Pick-n-Pay complex continue to hover like a Damoclean sword. This matter will be studied in detail in later issues of the Coventry Village News.

F. David Gill

THE FUTURE OF PICK-N-PAY

With the controversial Rock Court houses down, it is time for Coventry Neighbors leadership to realistically consider probable changes in the Coventry Pick-N-Pay. Total opposition to any and all change is unwise if and when changes do arrive, "total" opponents will be in no position to bargain and influence those changes. Simple rhetoric that "Coventry doesn't need" a shopping mall or what-have-you obscures the real issue of what Coventry DOES need.

First, it should be clear that the densely populated, pedestrian-intensive Coventry area does need a supermarket; the number of elderly residents alone justifies that conclusion. Secondly, the prime choice for that supermarket is the one we have; the Coventry community has heard a lot of brave talk over the past seven years about alternatives to Pick-N-Pay, with no outcome of any substance whatsoever. Thirdly, a vastly improved Pick-N-Pay, is clearly preferable to the present one.

While the needs of the neighborhood justify an improved Pick-N-Pay those improvements will represent additional investment that must itself be justified financially; the only way to do that is through increased trade. The more improvements the store makes, the more it must seek to draw trade from beyond its immediate, "captive" market. This means expansion as well as improvement. Any analysis that fails to take this last point into account is utter fantasy. The possibility of a federal UDAG grant makes the investment more feasible but does not change the basic fact; as UDAG money must be matched several times over by local, private investment.

What are some of the changes the community might reasonably demand in an improved Pick-N-Pay? One obvious area is PRODUCE. The store could use a lot more variety; a comparison trip to Russo's demonstrates this. At the same time the store should emphasize the low-price end, considering the number of low- and moderate-income people in the area. Management could take a more intelligent look at what items would have unique appeal in Coventry.

Another important area is SERVICE. There is no excuse for the typical understaffing in which checkout lines are backed up into the shelf aisles while one or more of the cash registers is idle. The community must make it clear that this is completely unacceptable in any expanded Pick-N-Pay.

Another service bottleneck is in the store office, which has installed a "Money Service," a computer terminal tied to a local bank. This is an important convenience, but it is serviced by the same personnel who deal with other customer matters. Increasingly, some people are using only the Money Service and tying up the office for shopping customers. The store is a supermarket, not a branch bank; arrangements should be made so that those seeking just the banking service delay only one another and not everyone else.

One present service feature to be encouraged is the sale of 2-wheel carts, an excellent example of servicing the unique needs of the neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENT is another essential category. There is too much promotional and display garbage clogging the shelf aisles. In a larger store there should be no community tolerance of

(Continued on page 6)

STREETWALKING -- SEPTEMBER

Now that everyone has recovered from the "Fair" life seems to have settled to a more sane pace. However, before we write "Fini" to '79 Fair business I want to take special notice of the Boy and Girl Scouts who did such a marvelous job on the clean up crews. I wish I could name everyone but there just isn't space. Many, many thanks to the Cleveland Heights Boy Scout, Girl Scout and Cub Scout troops which participated. A VERY SPECIAL hats off salute to their superbly competent coordinator, Kathy Young. These kids go a long way towards restoring hope for the future.

We note, sadly, that Carol Lindenmuth is re-locating to Shaker Square. Carol's shop has been a real asset to Coventry because she offers the unique, tasteful kinds of clothing that so many of us love. Good luck, Carol. We will miss you.

High Tide Rock Bottom will be moving on Saturday, September 15. Marcia will accept volunteer help on moving day. Anyone who wants to share the work and the fun, may do so by going in and signing up -- IN ADVANCE.

While strolling down Coventry a week ago some friends of mine spotted a broken window at the Food Project. They hailed a passing police car, which turned out to be from East Cleveland. They stopped, looked and said they would notify the Cleveland Heights police. Ten minutes later a CHPD car drove up, looked the situation over and drove away. My friends decided to stick around because they couldn't just go away and leave the broken window unguarded. An hour later the former owner, who had been called by the CHPD, came, entered the store through the broken window, found the number of the new owner and called her. It wasn't until almost two hours after the original call that the CHPD stopped by to see if everything was all right. I hereby nominate the CHPD for a very special "Golden Snail Of The Month" award

Coventry Art is again to be commended for its latest innovation. Its series of Saturday evening chamber music concerts is a great idea. It's kind of ironic that while Fred Meatz' work was being displayed at the gallery, his house on Rock Court was being demolished.

Only on Coventry can you take your shoes to a book store for repair. --- The Rocky Horror Picture Show is celebrating its second birthday with a Gala party September 7 & 8.

The street is changing - faces and shops come and go. Soon the devastation of the fires will no longer be visible. Irv's will be open again; Marcia (High Tide etc) is moving to where the Water Bed store burned and the work goes on at Coventryard. Most of this evolution takes place as part of the political process. That process will be examined again this fall during the campaigns for City Council. Get involved, know the issues, ask questions. It's your neighborhood, your city.

Bobbie Littell

THE FUTURE OF PICK-N-PAY (Continued from page 4)

this nuisance. Also, the store has been good about refraining from blaring promotional announcements over its P.A. system, and this laudable restraint should continue.

PARKING is vital, especially in view of the need for expanded trade. Some Coventry leaders have intricate theories about how we really don't need more commercial parking. The fact is that, in a City-wide survey of shoppers conducted by the Local Development Corporation, the NUMBER ONE consumer complaint for ALL CLEVELAND HEIGHTS was lack of Coventry parking! However driving habits evolve, you can be sure that the short-haul family shopping trip will be one of the last usages to go. A rigid anti-parking posture is a disservice to neighborhood and community.

If we want to have a hand in our own future, we must perceive and articulate our wants and needs, and not merely oppose changes reflexively.

Dave Burwasser

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COVENTRYARD UP-DATE

As any fool can plainly see, the work on Coventryard has begun. Now the community waits to determine how long this project will take.

According to Tom Ziska, project architect, "selective demolition" may last about four to six weeks. After that, preparation work will begin on steel installation, masonry, and utilities. The entire renovation is expected to take about 40 weeks. At that time, the building will be suitable for improvements by commercial tenants. These tenants will be largely responsible for determining the location of internal partitions and special facilities for the types of businesses involved.

It is a very large project, and it has a long, long way to go before it is truly finished.

-- Alan Rapoport

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"ICE MAN" COMING

Dobama announces its opener - Eugene O'Neill's "The Ice Man Cometh" starting Oct 18 running through Nov. 10. Other offerings for the season will be "Silent Night, Lonely Night" by Robert O. Anderson, Nov. 29-Dec.22. "Confusion" by Alan Ayckburn, Jan. 17-Feb. 9. Albee's "A Delicate Balance" from Feb 29-March 22 and "Augustin" by Marge & John Petrone, April 17-May 10.

Subscription tickets 10 for \$35 (\$30. if purchased before Sept. 15) can be had by calling...

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AWARDS

To encourage and recognize individual and collective efforts to improve the City's physical environment and preserve its excellence, Cleveland Heights and the Heights Community Congress are sponsoring a community improvement awards program open to all.

The purpose of this program is to recognize people who have improved their physical place of living and working since 1974 in the City of Cleveland Heights. Awards will be given in the following categories; individual residence, multi-residential, individual shops, large scale shopping & business development, special projects, and street awards (by neighborhood.)

To qualify, improvements must be visible from a public right-of-way. They may be additions, restorations, renovations, new construction, painting and maintenance to exteriors, interior treatment visible from the outside, exterior spaces, sitting areas, landscaping, graphics, lighting, street furniture, or signage.

For more information, call the HCC at 321-6775. Nominations may be made by any individual or group during mid-September.

A SAD NOTE

Bill Ernest died at age 75 on August 19. He had been quite ill for a few weeks.

Many in the community who never even knew Bill's name are saddened by his death. Bill was that frail, little man on a pair of wooden crutches, who could be seen making his slow, painful way along Mayfield and Coventry.

Bill Ernest was an intelligent, witty, and proud man, who became irascible only when someone offered him a handout. When Bill was grouchy, the twinkle in his eye could be seen in Bedford.

CNI TO ELECT NEW OFFICERS

Every year, Coventry Neighbors, Inc. must consider its origins, think of its future, and collectively resolve the crucial question of who will represent the organization for the next year. In accordance with long-standing tradition, this notice is being printed to remind everyone that the election of officers will be held at the October monthly meeting.

Candidates for office should live in the Coventry area and are generally expected to give a damn about the neighborhood. CNI will elect a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, Two trustees, and a Representative to the Heights Community Congress Board of Trustees.

Coventry Village News
Heights Community Congress
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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A new "no loitering" sign is posted near the Coventry Pizza parking lot, much to the dismay of veterans of the late '60s and much to the distress of local residents who enjoy loitering on Coventry Road.

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SIGH OF RELIEF OF THE WEEK: When asked how the new deli would look when it is finished, Irv Gulko recently remarked that it would be "very trendy." When further asked how he would describe the decor of the old Irv's he stated that, "Oh, that was trendy, too." Many locals are now reassured. We are not quite sure why.

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THE NEXT MEETING OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. WILL TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1979 pm, AT THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY ON LANCASTER ROAD, ACROSS FROM THE MUSICIANS' TOWER.

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The following letter was received by the CVN recently:

Dear Sir,

I am more than a little disturbed at the manner in which you used my name in the feature story: "Fame and Chickens on Coventry Road", in the current issue of Coventry Village news.

I gave no reporter of yours permission to use this material which I feel is degrading, and I demand and apology or retraction in your next issue of the news letter

The story grossly maligned my name, character and reputation by the use of a "nickname" I deplore.

It is one thing to use the term in idle conversation among friends, but when read by hundreds in your newsletter I am placed in the position of an object of ridicule.

This story, as reported by your staff, may seem humorous, but I see little humor in your attempt to infringe upon my privacy and good name.

I hereby demand an apology forthwith.

Very truly yours,
Louis Collett

We are very sorry that Mr. Collett was offended by the story which was published in an attempt to portray some of the humanity and pathos that can be found in our village. Our apologies we have no wish to offend.

BML

OPEN PANTRY CRITICIZED

The Open Pantry store on Mayfield near Coventry has painted some arrows and lines on the sidewalks in front of the store. The purpose of the markings is to make it easier for cars to get in and out of the parking lot. The markings, however, use public property for a private purpose. This has drawn an objection from Coventry neighbor, F. David Gill. F. wrote a letter to City Hall asking the city's lawyer to either get the markings erased or explain why not in writing to F. Coventry Village News will follow this story.

cni

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Coventry Village News
September 1979

Community Development Block Grant
...Coventry Village Update

The new municipal parking lot on lower Hampshire Road (near Coventry) is nearly complete. Landscaping and lighting for this 27 car lot should be installed in the near future. The lot features both permit and metered spaces. Special facilities for the handicapped are also available.

Plans for the expansion of two other parking lots continue as two older frame houses have been purchased on Mayfield Road (near Coventry). Arrangements for tenant relocation have been finalized. More than \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds have been spent on these projects.

New water lines have been put in on Euclid Heights Boulevard and Hampshire Lane. When this project is completed, water pressure for the residents of this area should be improved.

Cleveland Heights City Council has decided not to spend Community Development money on the proposed new Coventry Library for the Coventryard project. However, Council has directed City staff to explore the possible use of the historically and architecturally significant Fairmount Center Building for library purposes. More on this subject next issue.

--Charles Owen

...And all that rubbish

The Cleveland Heights Health Department is now giving out tickets to those residents who persist in putting garbage and rubbish out earlier than 7:00pm of the evening before the regular garbage day. Persons who put garbage and rubbish out earlier than the 7:00pm are creating a potential health hazard and are adding to the visual pollution of the Coventry area.

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Board of Zoning Appeals News

At the September 19th. meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, Import Delicious Foods of 1844 Coventry will seek a conditional use permit and a parking variance for a new restaurant and a carryout operation. Also, the Unitarian Society of Cleveland will seek a conditional use permit to allow the Learning Community, a primary school, to occupy the first floor of the church.

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